

Message Text

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SUBJECT: SMALL HOPE OF RESUMING IRA TRUCE

1. ON MORNING OF JAN 17, FEW HOURS AFTER PROVO IRA ANNOUNCED END OF ITS TRUCE, THERE WAS A FAINT HOPE HERE FOR RESUMPTION OF IT. PROVO-WATCHERS WERE BASING THIS HOPE ON FOLLOWING FACTORS: (A) IRA STATEMENT ON END OF TRUCE LEFT DOOR OPEN TO FURTHER TALKS AND DID NOT SAY EXACTLY WHEN VIOLENCE WOULD RESUME; (B) NI SECRETARY REES SPECIFICALLY NOTED THAT BRITISH OFFICIALS WOULD TALK TO PROVO SINN FEIN; (C) PROTESTANT CLERGYMEN HAVE EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO RESUME ROLE AS MEDIATORS; (D) CLOSE READING OF PROVO STATEMENT SUGGESTS THAT REAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS OF ACTIONS BY BOTH IRA AND BRITISH DURING TRUCE MAY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO ITS END.

2. SPLIT BETWEEN PROVO HAWKS AND DOVES IS ANOTHER FACTOR, BUT ONE WHICH OUTSIDERS HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO EVALUATE RELIABLY. FROM ALL REPORTS, SPLIT IS REAL AND MAY HAVE ACCOUNTED FOR CONFUSING REPORTS ON LIKELIHOOD OF EXTENDING TRUCE. SOME PROVO LEADERS DO APPEAR GENUINELY INTERESTED IN CEASE-FIRE -- WHICH IS NOT TO SAY THAT THEY CAN ACCEPT REALISTIC TRUCE TERMS. (WE SEE LITTLE EVIDENCE THAT ANY OF PROVO LEADERS ARE ABLE TO RISE ABOVE THEIR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RIGID MYTHOLOGY.)

3. LOCAL PRESS PUTS MOST OF BLAME ON PROVOS FOR ENDING CEASEFIRE. REES DRAWS LESS CRITICISM, BUT MOST WRITERS CONSIDER HIM EXCESSIVELY SLOW AND TIMID, ESPECIALLY IN HIS RESPONSE TO PROVOS ON INTERNMENT ISSUE. SOME COMMENTATORS SUGGEST THAT THERE MIGHT HAVE BEEN WORTHWHILE TRUCE EXTENSION IF INTERNEES HAD BEEN RELEASED FAST ENOUGH TO SAVE FACE FOR PROVO DOVES.

4. GOI AND OPPOSITION ARE AVOIDING SUBSTANTIVE COMMENT, PERHAPS HOPING THAT TRUCE CAN BE REVIED. PROVO STATEMENT ON END OF TRUCE IS ALMOST AS CRITICAL OF GOI AS OF BRITISH. ACCORDING TO SOME JOURNALISTS, GOI THINKS BRITISH MADE A TACTICAL ERROR BY LETTING TRUCE BREAK DOWN OVER INTERNMENT ISSUE, WHICH IS THE ONLY ONE ON WHICH PROVOS ENJOY ANY PUBLIC SUPPORT. AS WE HAVE REPORTED PREVIOUSLY, HOWEVER, GOI NEVER HAD ANY CONFIDENCE THAT TRUCE WOULD LAST.

5. COMMENT: WE WOULD NOT WISH TO DRAW TOO MANY CONCLUSIONS FROM TRUCE BREAKDOWN, SINCE THERE WAS NEVER ANY PROOF THAT PROVOS COULD ACCEPT GENUINE PEACE TERMS. YET EVERY EFFORT HAD TO BE MADE TO GIVE PEACE A CHANCE. ON BALANCE, WE WOULD HAVE PREFERRED TO SEE MORE EFFECTIVE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN BRITISH AND PROVOS, BUT GOI TAKES EXACTLY THE OPPOSITE VIEW.
MOORE

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